

*Leaping into his chariot, Hector urged the Trojans on.*

But Patroclus answered, "You boast too much, Hector. It was not you that slew me, but Apollo. And mark you, death is close to you by the hand of the great Achilles."

Hector replied, "Why do you prophesy my death? It may be that, as I have slain you, so shall I slay the great Achilles." So Hector spoke, but his words went unheard by Patroclus, who lay dead.

## HOW THE DEATH OF PATROCLUS ROUSED ACHILLES

Fierce was the fight about the body of Patroclus, and many heroes on both sides fell. First to fall was the man who had wounded Patroclus in the back, for when he came near to strip the dead man of his arms, Menelaus rushed at him with his spear and slew him. Then Hector came and stood over the body, and Menelaus did not dare to go against him, for he knew he was no match for him in fighting. So Hector stripped off the arms of Patroclus, the arms which Achilles had given him to wear, and put them on himself. When Zeus saw him do this, he was angry, and said, "These arms will cost Hector dear."



The battle for the body of Patroclus grew fiercer and fiercer. For the Greeks said, "It were better that the earth should open and swallow us alive than that we should let the Trojans carry off the body of Patroclus." And the Trojans said, "Now if we must be slain fighting for the body of this man, be it so, but we will not yield."

As they fought, the horses that pulled the chariot of Achilles, which Patroclus had driven into battle, stood apart and would not move. The tears rushed from their eyes, for

roused: moved to action  
dear: at a high price

they loved Patroclus, and they knew that he was dead. Still they stood, and they would neither enter the battle nor turn back to the ships. And the Greeks could not move them with the lash or with threat or with gentle words. They stood, their heads drooped to the ground, the tears trickling from their eyes, their long manes trailing in the dust.

When Zeus saw them, he pitied them. And he said, "It was not wise that I gave you, immortal creatures as you are, to a mortal man, for of all things that live and move upon the earth, surely man is the most miserable. But Hector shall not have you. It is enough for him—yea, it is too much—that he should have the arms of Achilles."

Then the horses moved from their places and obeyed their driver as before. And Hector could not take them, though he longed to do so.

All this time, as the battle raged around the body of Patroclus, a messenger made his way to Achilles. He found the great warrior by the door of his tent. Then he said, weeping as he spoke, "I bring bad news for you. Patroclus is dead, and Hector has his arms, but even now the Greeks and Trojans are fighting for his body."

Achilles threw himself upon the ground and took the dust of the plain in his hands and poured it on his head. He wept and tore his hair. But his mother, Thetis, heard his cry, and from the depths of the sea she came and laid her hand on his head and asked, "Why do you weep, my son?"

Achilles answered, "My friend Patroclus is dead, and Hector has the arms which I gave him to wear. I care not to live, except to avenge his death."

Then Thetis said, "My son, do not speak so. You know that when Hector dies, then is the hour near when you also must die."

Then Achilles cried in great anger, "I would that I could die this hour, for I sent my friend to his death—and I, who am greater in battle than all the Achaeans, could not help him. Cursed be the anger that sets men to strive against one another, as it made me strive with Agamemnon. As for my fate—what does it matter? Let it come when it may, as long as first I have my vengeance upon Hector. Therefore, mother, do not seek to keep me back from the battle."

Thetis answered, "Be it so, my son. But you cannot go into battle without arms. Tomorrow I will go to Hephaestus and have him make new arms for you."

While they talked the men of Troy drove the Greeks back more and more. Then the body of Patroclus would have fallen to the Trojans, had not Zeus sent a messenger to Achilles.

"Rouse thee, Achilles," said the messenger, "or the body of Patroclus will be a prey for the dogs of Troy."

Achilles answered, "How shall I go?—for arms have I none, nor do I know of any man's I might wear."

The messenger replied, "Go only to the trench and show yourself; then the Trojans will draw back, and the Greeks will have a breathing space."

So Achilles ran to the trench. And Athena put her great shield about his shoulders, and set a circle of gold above his head that shone like a flame of fire. Then he cried out, and his voice was as the sound of a trumpet. It was a sound terrible to hear, and the hearts of the men of Troy were filled with fear. They stood in dumb amaze when they saw above his head the flaming fire that Athena had kindled. The very horses were frightened and started so that the chariots clashed together.

---

kindled: lit; set ablaze



Three times Achilles shouted across the trench, and three times the Trojans fell back. Then the Greeks took up the body of Patroclus and put it on a bier and carried it to the tent of Achilles, as Achilles himself, weeping, walked by the side of the body.

They washed the body of Patroclus, and put ointment into the wounds, and laid it on a bed, and covered it with linen from head to foot, and over this draped a white robe. And all through the night there was great mourning for Patroclus in the camp of the Greeks.

### THE MAKING OF THE ARMS

Thetis, immortal mother of Achilles, went to the house of Hephaestus, the god of all those who worked in gold and silver and iron. She found him busy at his work, making cauldrons for the palace of the gods on Mount Olympus. These cauldrons had golden wheels beneath them with which they could move on their own power into the chambers of the palace and back out again, as the gods willed.

When Hephaestus heard that Thetis wished to see him, he smiled and said, "Truly, there could be no guest more welcome than Thetis. When my mother cast me out from her because I was lame, it was Thetis and her sister who received me in their house under the sea. Nine years I dwelt with them, and hammered many a pretty trinket for them in a cave close by. Truly, I would give my life to serve Thetis."

Then he put away his tools, washed himself, and came into the house. To Thetis he said, "Tell me all that is in your mind, for I will do all that you desire if only it can be done."

---

bier: a frame on which to carry a dead body  
cauldrons: large kettles

Then Thetis told of how her son Achilles had been shamed by Agamemnon, and of his great anger, and all that came to pass afterwards, and how Patroclus had been slain in battle, and how the arms were lost. Having told this, she said, "Hephaestus, make for my son, Achilles, I pray you, a shield and a helmet, and greaves for his legs, and a strong breastplate."

Hephaestus answered, "I will make for him such arms as men will wonder at when they see them." So he went to his forge and turned the bellows to the fire and bade them work, for they needed no hand to work them. And he put copper and tin and gold and silver into the fire to make them soft, and took the hammer in one hand and the tongs in the other.

First he made a shield, great and strong. On it he made an image of the earth and the sky and the sea, with the sun and the moon and all the stars. Also, he made images of two cities: in one city there was peace, and in the other city there was war. In the city of peace they led a bride to the house of her husband with music and dancing. But round about the city of war there was an army of besiegers, and on the wall stood men defending it. Also, the men of this same city had set an ambush by a river at a place where the cattle came down to drink. And when the cattle came down, the men that lay in ambush rose up quickly and took them, and slew the herdsmen. And the army of the besiegers heard the cry, and rode on horses, and came quickly to the river, and fought with the men who had taken the cattle.

---

greaves: protective armor for the shins

forge: a furnace where metal is melted and shaped

bellows: a tool that pumps air, used by a blacksmith to feed a fire

ambush: a trap for an enemy; a sudden surprise attack





Also, he made the image of one field in which men were plowing, and of another in which reapers reaped the corn; and behind the reapers came boys who gathered the corn in their arms and bound it in sheaves. At the top of the field stood the master, glad at heart because the harvest was good.

He made, too, the image of a vineyard, and through the vineyard there was a path, and along the path went young men and maids bearing baskets of grapes, and in the midst stood a boy holding a harp of gold, who sang a pleasant song. Also he made a herd of oxen going from the stalls to the

pasture; and close by, two lions had laid hold of a great bull and were devouring it, while the dogs stood far off and barked.

He made as well the image of a dance of men and maids. The men wore daggers of gold hanging from silver belts, and the maids wore gold crowns round their heads. And round about the shield, he made the ocean, like a great river.

Also he made a strong breastplate, and a great helmet with a ridge of gold in which the plumes should be set, and greaves of tin for the legs. When he had finished all this work, he gave the armor to Thetis. She flew swift as a hawk to her son, and found him lying on the ground, weeping aloud, holding in his arms the body of Patroclus.

Catching her son by the hand, the goddess said, "Come now, let us leave. It was the will of the gods that he should die. But you must think about other things. Come, and take this gift from Hephaestus—armor of exceeding strength and beauty, such as no man has ever yet worn."

As she spoke, she placed the armor at the feet of Achilles. It shone so brightly that it dazzled the eyes of the Myrmidons. Achilles took up the arms, and his eyes blazed with fire, and he rejoiced in his heart. "Mother," he said, "these indeed are such arms as only the gods could make. Gladly will I put them on for the battle."

#### THE VENGEANCE OF ACHILLES

So Achilles gathered the Greeks for the battle, and his armor flashed like fire. On the wide plain between the shore and the high-walled city, the two armies gathered.

Then Apollo spoke to Aeneas, the son of Aphrodite and a Trojan nobleman, and among the Trojans second only to Hector in fame and valor. "Stand up against Achilles," said



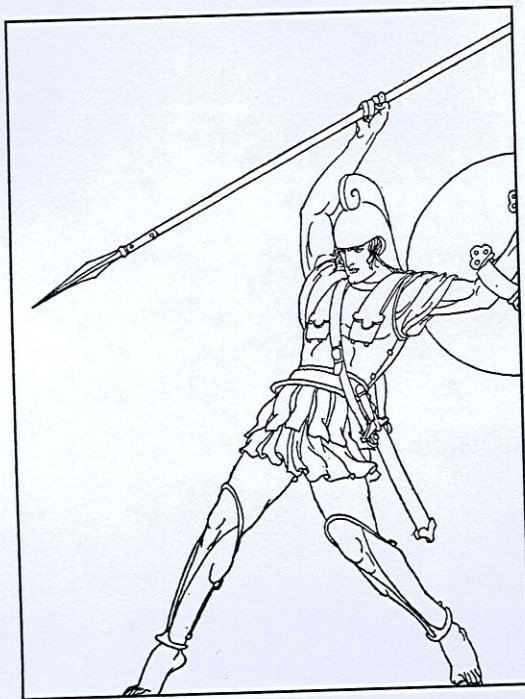
the god to the Trojan prince. "Drive straight at him with your spear, and do not fear his fierce words and looks."

So Aeneas came forth to meet Achilles. And Achilles said to him, "What do you mean by this, Aeneas? Do you think to slay me? Have the Trojans promised to make you their king if you prevail over me? You will not find it an easy task."

Aeneas said, "Son of Peleus, you will not frighten me with your words, for I also am the son of a goddess. Come, let us try who is the better of us two."

So he cast his spear, and it struck full on the shield of Achilles, and made so dreadful a sound that Achilles himself was shaken. But a shield made by a god could not be shattered by the spear of a mortal man. Indeed, it pierced the first and second layers, which were of bronze, but was stopped by the third, which was of gold, and touched not the last two layers, made of tin.

Now Achilles threw his spear. Easily it pierced the shield of the Trojan, and, though it did not wound him, it came so close that he was deadly frightened. Yet he did not flee, for when Achilles drew his sword and rushed at  
  
prevail: to triumph



him, he took up a great stone from the ground to throw at him. Nevertheless he would certainly have been slain were it not for the help of the gods. For it was decreed that Aeneas and his children after him should reign over Troy in the years to come. Therefore Poseidon, upon the order of Zeus, hid Aeneas in a cloud of fog, then caught him up and carried him away from the battle. But first he took Achilles's spear from the shield and laid it at the hero's feet. As the fog cleared, Achilles saw his spear and cried, "Here is a great wonder. My spear that I threw I see lying at my feet, but the man at whom I threw it, I see not. Truly this Aeneas must be dear to the gods."

Then he rushed into the battle, slaying right and left. As the Trojans fled before Achilles, they came to the river Xanthus, and they leaped into it till it was full of horses and men. Achilles left his spear upon the bank and rushed into the water with only his sword. And the Trojans were like fishes in the sea when they flee from a dolphin: in rocks and shallows they hide themselves, but the great beast devours them apace.

Back and yet further back Achilles drove the men of Troy before him, closer and closer to the city walls. That hour the Greeks would have taken Troy, but Apollo saved it by drawing Achilles away from the city. And the way in which he saved the city was this. He put courage into the heart of Agenor, a Trojan chief, who stood by the gate waiting for Achilles. And when Achilles came near, Agenor threw his spear and struck his leg beneath the knee. But the strong greave turned aside the spear. Enraged, Achilles rushed to slay his attacker. But Apollo lifted Agenor from the ground and set him safely within the city walls.

apace: swiftly; rapidly



Then Apollo took the form of Agenor, and fled before Achilles, and Achilles pursued him far from the walls of Troy. At last the god turned and spoke to him: "Why do you pursue me, swift-footed Achilles? Have you not yet discovered that I am a god, and all your fury is in vain? And now all the Trojans are safe within the city, and you are here, far out of the way, seeking to kill one who cannot die."

In great wrath Achilles answered him, "You have done me wrong in drawing me away from the city, Great Archer. Had I the power, you would pay dearly for this cheat."

The Trojans were now safe in the city, refreshing themselves after all their toil. Hector alone remained outside the walls, standing in front of the gates of the city.

From the high wall, King Priam spied Achilles rushing toward the city. He cried to Hector, "Oh my son, come within the walls, for you are the hope of the city."

Then Queen Hecuba cried to him, "O Hector, my son, have pity. Come, I beseech you, inside the walls, and do not stand in battle against him."

But Hector was resolved to await the coming of Achilles and meet him in battle. And as he waited, he thought, "It is better to meet in arms and see whether Zeus will give the victory to him or to me."

Achilles approached, brandishing his great spear, and the flashing of his arms was like fire or the sun when it rises. When he saw this, Hector trembled. His nerve failed him, and he turned to run. Fast he fled from the gates, and fast Achilles pursued him. Past the watchtower they ran, past the wild fig

---

in vain: useless

toil: hard labor

beseech: to beg

brandishing: waving in a threatening manner

tree, along the wagon road which went about the walls. On they ran, one fleeing, the other pursuing. Thrice they ran around the city, but Apollo helped Hector, or he could not have held out against Achilles, who was swiftest of foot among the sons of men.

As they sat in their place on the top of Mount Olympus, the gods looked on. And Zeus said, "This is a piteous thing I see. My heart is grieved for Hector. See how the great Achilles is pursuing him! Come, let us discuss the matter. Shall we save him from death, or shall we let him fall by the spear of Achilles?"

Athena replied, "What is this that you propose? Will you save a man that the fates appoint to die?"

Then Zeus said, "So it must be, but it is a thing I hate."

All this time, Hector still fled, and Achilles still pursued. Then Athena flew down to Achilles and said, "This is your day of glory. Stand here and take breath, and I will make Hector meet you." So Achilles stood, leaning on his spear.

Then Athena took the shape of one of Hector's brothers, Deiphobus, and came near to him, and said, "My brother, Achilles presses you hard; but come, we two will stand against him."

Hector answered, "O Deiphobus, I have always loved you, and now I love you still more, for you alone have come to my help, while the rest remain within the walls."

Then Hector turned to Achilles and cried out, "Three times have you pursued me round the walls and I dared not stand against you, but now I fear you no more. Only let us make this covenant: if Zeus gives the victory to me today, I will take your arms but return your body to the Greeks. Promise, therefore, to do the same with me."

---

thrice: three times

piteous: worthy of pity; pitiful

covenant: a formal agreement; a solemn promise



Achilles frowned and said, "Hector, do not speak to me of covenants. Men and lions make no promises to each other, neither is there any agreement between wolves and sheep. Come, let us fight, that I may have vengeance for the blood of all my comrades whom you have slain, and especially for Patroclus."

Then he threw his great spear, but Hector saw it coming and avoided it, crouching on the ground, so that it flew above his head and fixed itself in the earth. But Athena snatched it up and gave it back to Achilles, though Hector did not see this.

"You have missed your aim, great Achilles," said Hector. "You shall not drive your steel into my back, but here into my breast, if the gods will it so. But now look out for my spear."

Then Hector threw his long-shafted spear. True aim he took, for the spear struck the very middle of Achilles's shield. It struck, but it did not pierce it, and bounded far away, for the shield was not made by the hand of man. Then Hector cried, "Deiphobus, give me your spear!"

But Deiphobus was nowhere to be seen. Hector stood dismayed: he knew that his end was near. Then he said to himself, "The gods have brought my doom upon me. But if I must die, let me at least die doing such a deed as men will remember in the years to come."

He drew his mighty sword and rushed at Achilles. But Achilles charged to meet him, his shield before his breast, his helmet bent forward as he ran. The gleam of his spear-point was as the gleam of the evening star. Achilles well knew the one unprotected spot in the armor that Hector had taken from Patroclus. Into the spot where the neck joins the shoulder he drove his spear, and Hector fell in the dust.

Achilles drew his spear out of the body, and stripped off the bloody armor. All the Greeks came about the dead man, marveling at his strength and beauty. Looking at one another they said, "Surely this Hector is less dreadful now than in the day when he burned our ships with fire."

#### PRIAM'S APPEAL TO ACHILLES

Andromache did not yet know what had happened. She sat in her dwelling, weaving a purple mantle embroidered with flowers. But when the sound of wailing came to her from the town, she rose hastily in great fear and called to her maidens, "Come to me, O maidens, that I may see what has happened, for I heard the voice of the queen, and I fear that some evil has come to the Trojans."

She hastened through the city, with terror in her heart. When she came to the wall, she stood and looked; and lo, she saw Achilles dragging the body of Hector to the ships. Then her eyes grew dim, and she fell fainting.

When Priam saw Achilles take Hector's body, he determined to go forth and beg Achilles to give him the body of his dear son. He took a great cup and poured out wine to Zeus, and prayed: "Hear me, Father Zeus, and grant that Achilles may pity me. Send me a sign, in order that I may go with a good heart to the Greeks."

And Zeus heard him and sent an eagle, his favorite bird, as a sure sign. Then the old man mounted his chariot in haste, and with a herald drove forth from the palace.

---

mantle: a loose sleeveless garment, worn over other clothing  
herald: an officer who acts as a messenger between leaders, especially in wartime